

# CULTURAL TOURS 2008

## 1. AMMAN, MADABA, MTN NEBO

### DAY TRIP

If you choose to attend, we will rally at the Billets @ 0730 with a 0810 departure.

Some of the sites you will visit in the city of Amman; the Citadel, site of the earliest fortifications is now subject to numerous excavations which have revealed remains from the Middle Bronze Age (2nd mill. BC) and the Iron Age (8th century BC), as well as from Hellenistic (2nd century BC) and late Roman to Arab Islamic Ages. In the Citadel, beside the Jordan Archaeological Museum, three important structures can be viewed: **The Byzantine Church**, the remains of a small Byzantine Basilica. Corinthian columns mark the site, which is thought to date from the 6th or 7th century AD. **The Temple of Hercules**, About 100 meters south of the church is what is thought to have been the Temple of Hercules, today also known as the Great Temple of Amman. The temple was built in the reign of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD). **Umayyad Palace Complex**, The most impressive building of the Citadel is known simply as Al-Qaser (the Palace), which dates back to the Islamic Umayyad period around 720 AD. Its exact function is unknown, but the building includes a monumental gateway, cruciform audience hall and four vaulted chambers. A colonnaded street runs through the complex and to the north and east, ruins of the palace grounds are visible. At the foot of the hill from the Citadel is a 6000 seat Roman Theater, which is an acoustic marvel.

Several Museums that we will visit, Jordan's National Archaeological Museum, The Folklore Museum, Souks and Modern City.

The next Attraction we will see is the City of Madaba (the city of the Mosaics), which has been intermittently inhabited for nearly 3,500 years. The chief attraction in this city is a wonderful vivid, sixth century Byzantine mosaic map of Jerusalem and the Holy Land; there are also literally hundreds of other mosaics scattered throughout Madaba's churches and homes. Followed by lunch at the Hareat Jhdodana. Then shopping at the Madaba Mosaics Shop.

Finally we will see Mount Nebo, the memorial to Moses and the presumed site of the prophet's death and burial. From a platform in front of the church one can enjoy a breathtaking view across the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea.

## 2. DEAD SEA TRIP

### DAY TRIP

If you choose to attend, we will rally at the Billets @ 0730 with a 0810 departure.

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The next Attraction we will see is Mount Nebo, the memorial to Moses and the presumed site of the prophet's death and burial. From a platform in front of the church one can enjoy a breathtaking view across the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea.

Then we will visit the Dead Sea, which lies within the Jordan Valley. The lowest point on earth, it has a historical and spiritual legacy of its own. Rich in minerals that have swept from adjacent wades, the Dead Sea, as well as having exceptionally buoyant water, is believed to have curative powers. The visitor can relax in the gently lapping waters without sinking, or try the well-known healing powers of minerals from the Dead Sea's muddy floor.

North of the Dead Sea, is the site called Maqdas, which is believed to be the site where Jesus was baptized? It's only recently been opened, and the entry fee is 5 JD per person. There are several large churches with huge baptismal fonts in front of them and big water cisterns; there's an extensive water channeling system that brought water from the Jordan River to these cisterns. Down on the bank of the River, there's still another church and baptismal font, and the walk at the lower part of the site is a really nice one, through high forests of reeds and tamarisks. All these churches are dated from the late 3rd Century, so we can safely say that if it's not the site of Jesus' baptism, it is at least the place where the earliest Christian pilgrims believed it to have happened.

Once we complete the tour of the Maqdas we will move back to the city of Amman.

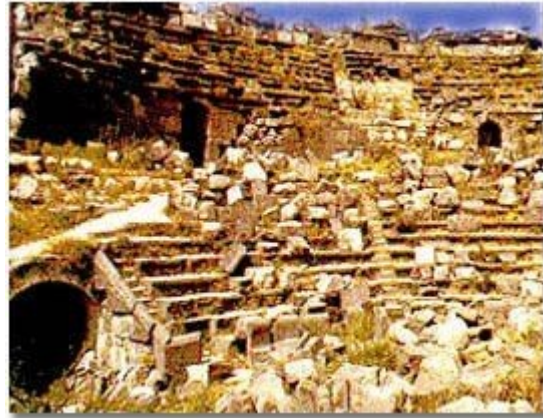
### 3. JERASH

#### DAY TRIP

If you choose to attend, we will rally at the Billets @ 0715 with a 0745 departure.

Historically known as Gadara, Um Qais is one of Jordan's most unique Greco Roman Decapolis sites. Tucked away in the hillside, at a height of 378 meters above sea level, Um Qais offers an incomparable panoramic view. An exciting walk through the ages is in store for the visitor.

Remnants of civilizations past solidly stand side by side; as stone, placed by ancient hands, tells of many travelers who entered its ancient gates. The Greeks were the first to marvel at the breathtaking view and established their acropolis. Later, Romans,



Byzantine and Ottomans would follow, leaving their own marks on this site. The most northerly of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan's touristic sites, Um Qais, throughout time, has continuously offered its visitors an unforgettable experience.

A PICTURESQUE DRIVE through the northern countryside of Jordan will take you to your ultimate destination of Um Qais. Ascending through the northern hills, allows for an exciting view of the Jordanian landscape and terrain particular to this region.

Um Qais is famous for its legacy of ancient civilizations. Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Ottoman architecture and artifacts produced in this ancient city can be found throughout the site. Um Qais is a testament of a chronological settlement of ancient cultures in this strategic location.

Nestled in the hillside, Um Qais offers unparalleled breath taking panoramic view. Standing on the terrace, the blue green Sea of Galilee (Lake Tiberias) and the majestic Syrian mountains of the Golan can be seen. On a clear day the snow capped Mount Hermon appears in the distance. This ancient acropolis also offers a



a serene view of the fertile northern Jordan valley. Breathing in the fresh air, one is impressed with the magnificent landscape surrounding the remnants and ruins.

## JERASH - A BRIEF HISTORY

In a remote, quiet valley among the mountains of Gilead lie the ruins of Jerash, at one time a city of the Decapolis, and the only one of that powerful league through whose streets and monuments we can wander and see them as they were in its heyday, untouched except by the hand of time. Greater cities, such as Gadara and Philadelphia, have vanished almost without trace, but the remoteness of Jerash has saved it from being used as a stone quarry for nearby towns and villages, and it is one of the most complete examples of a provincial Roman city to be seen anywhere. The setting adds greatly to the charm of the place, lying as it does in a valley running roughly north and south and with a perennial stream running through the centre of it. The banks of the stream are covered in walnut and poplar trees, which look green and cool even in the heat of summer, when the surface of the surrounding hills is reduced to a harsh brown aridity. On the south the hills draw away on both side, and the village of Sweileh can be seen on the far skyline. The site now lies on a modern highway that links Amman with the northern boundary of the Kingdom towards Syria; the drive takes 40 minutes from Amman at a leisurely speed. As one approaches, it is after a corner of the highway that he is suddenly faced with a wonderful view of the ruins with the Triumphal Arch in the foreground. On the other side of the highway lies the modern town of Jerash.

The history of Jerash goes back to prehistoric times, and on the slopes east of the Triumphal Arch can be found flint implements, which show that here was the site of the Neolithic settlement. Outside the walls to the north was a small Early Bronze Age village about 2500 B.C., and on the hilltops above are remains of dolmens of a slightly earlier period. There are now no traces of occupation during the rest of the Bronze Age and the Iron Age, but had there been settlements anywhere within the area of the Roman city they would certainly have disappeared or become buried during the course of its construction. There are many Iron Age settlements in the vicinity, and it is unlikely that a place with so fine a water supply as that of Jerash would have remained unoccupied.